



THE SECRETARY OF THE NAVY
WASHINGTON DC 20350-1000

JUL 20 2011

From: Secretary of the Navy
To: Commander Liam M. Bruen, USN (Retired)

Subj: SECRETARIAL LETTER OF CENSURE

Ref: (a) NAVINSGEN Military Whistleblower Reprisal Report of Investigation (ROI), Navy Hotline Complaint 201001894, of 27 Oct 10
(b) NAVINSGEN ROI, Navy Hotline Complaint 201001885, of 10 Mar 11
(c) Your memo of 13 Apr 11
(d) Manual of the Judge Advocate General, JAGMAN Sec. 0114

1. References (a) and (b) substantiate that, while serving as Commanding Officer (CO), Strike Fighter Squadron (VFA) 136, you failed to halt and consequently condoned the hazing of subordinate officers during a call sign review board (CSRB), you improperly permitted sexual harassment in the form of a hostile working environment within VFA-136, and you issued an unfavorable fitness report as reprisal for protected communications made by a complainant to the Inspector General. I have considered the response to these findings that you provide in reference (c).

2. As CO of VFA-136 you were given a position of special trust and responsibility. During the CSRB of 17 August 2009, you failed to exercise appropriate leadership and demonstrated a profound lack of judgment.

a. Commander, U.S. Fleet Forces Command frames your responsibility in a clear and succinct manner:

(1) "Although I find the Commanding Officer's 20 August 2009 response to the unacceptable callsign review board positive, I expect Commanding Officers to recognize the inappropriateness of a situation as it unfolds and forcefully inject their leadership in real-time, not after the fact." Reference (b), page F-1.

b. Your own statement to the Naval Inspector General (NAVINSGEN) reflects a similar understanding:

(1) "When you see inappropriate behavior from a squadron member, it's your duty to make every reasonable effort to stop

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it before it develops into something greater, any criminal or something that I need to start taking people to Mast for. That's what...officers do; they interject themselves, they're proactive and they are leaders. When they see people making mistakes, it's their responsibility to interject themselves to stop the incident from happening." Reference (a), page 24.

c. You failed to act in accord with the very principle you espoused. You recognized some of the proposed callsigns as being inappropriate; many were, in fact, grossly offensive. Rather than terminate the CSRB and immediately address the issue, you allowed the board to continue, actually participated in the proceeding by voting on callsigns, and did not again address the issue with the wardroom until after a complaint had been received. The remaining allegations substantiated by the NAVINSGEN flow directly from your failure to act during the meeting of 17 August 2009.

3. Your abrogation of command responsibility constitutes a significant deviation from the standards expected of all naval officers, particularly those in placed in command. Accordingly, you are hereby censured for your leadership failure. A copy of this letter will be placed in your official service record in accordance with reference (d).

4. Within 15 days of receipt of this letter, you may forward a rebuttal, consistent with reference (d), for inclusion in your official record, if you so desire.



Ray Mabus